

## MEANTIME: A BRIEF PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF A TRANS\* TEACHER

Jan Buterman, *University of Alberta*

In the context of Alberta public education, teachers should not expect discrimination on the basis of gender identity. However, in practice, exclusionary behaviours towards people whose gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth are frequent and may encompass any and all connected to the school environment including legislators, administrators, and students. In this brief personal narrative, I explore some unexpected moments of trans\* exclusion, a gap between professionalism and practice that I describe as the “Meantime.”

### Introduction: Meantime as Analytical Moment

The word *meantime* can be used as a noun, adverb, and, rarely, an adjective. As a noun, it is the “time intervening between one particular period or event and another”; its adverbial use is similar to the noun, “during or within the time intervening between a particular period or event and a subsequent one; while or until a (specified) period or event occurs” (“Meantime,” 2015). While reflecting on these two moments of trans<sup>1</sup> exclusion, I was struck by how such moments are poised together as a distortion of time and a complex rush of physiological and intellectual response, a profound sense of being between, being neither here nor there. In the context of this personal narrative, *meantime* also involves a play on words, where *mean* involves an action of unkindness during a particular moment or *time*. I do not suggest that the actions giving rise to a

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<sup>1</sup> Trans-identities are increasingly commonly described by using the word *trans* along with a wildcard asterisk (\*), which is indicative of the many possible identities that may be associated with the word *trans*. For more information on the history of this orthography, see Ryan (2014).

Meantime are inherently intended to be unkind, rather than the outcome or consequence of the Meantime is not predictable at the moment of its occurrence.

### **Meantime One: The Administrator**

Imagine, if you will, the scene: a manager's office complete with a large desk, a small side table, three chairs. During your brief lunch break with your colleagues, your manager calls you to his office. You take the lone empty seat. Sitting around the table is you, the manager, and his assistant. You're a diligent, hard worker. When the manager called you in, you thought you'd made a positive impression. Maybe the manager was prepared to praise your work, perhaps even offer you a longed-for promotion. But the presence of the assistant manager confuses you. You realise you're in the middle of the room, management between you and the door. But, you reason, the meeting can't be about anything too serious. After all, you're in this office together yet you are alone; no one from the union is there to represent you.

Then the manager speaks.

“I don't like to beat around the bush,” he says, beginning to beat around the bush. “I've called the union and our lawyer, but we haven't heard anything back from the union about the situation.”

Your stomach knots and the blood in your veins turns to ice. *Union? Lawyer? Why are you here, and why is the union not here with you? What have you done?* You know you are a good worker. You have never been in trouble with the law, but the manager is talking about a lawyer. You know that whatever is going on must be a mistake. *How can the manager be talking about a lawyer? Why does the management believe they need to talk to a lawyer and the union before talking to you? What could be the matter? Why is this happening to you?* You have this

conversation with yourself in less than a heartbeat, or perhaps your heart has actually stopped just as your breath has caught, unable to draw or expel. Your thoughts race, circling around and around, trying to make things—anything—fit. Trying to make sense of the senseless.

The manager mentions “the situation” several more times, each statement giving no further clue as to what “the situation” is that the manager might be referring to. Finally, the manager states, “the lawyer says it’s okay.”

Oh, well, wonderful! *It’s okay*, you think. But you still don’t know what is okay—you don’t know why the union was called and you don’t know why you’re in this room with two managers and no representation while management talks about a lawyer. Other than, apparently, the lawyer says *it’s okay*. You’re still completely at a loss, although it appears that whatever is going on does not somehow involve breaking a law.

In a voice barely constrained from breaking under the intense fear still saturating your entire body you ask, “Could you . . . please . . . perhaps, explain to me exactly what is ‘the situation’ we’re talking about here?”

Taking a deep breath, the manager pauses before stating, “Apparently you’re . . . you’re . . . transgendering.”

Your heart begins to beat again. Air rushes into your lungs. Your blood starts to thaw. *Oh, that!* you think. The soothing balm of relief starts to erase the fear clutching deep within your being. As you begin to breathe again, to live again, management continues. You are told that a co-worker was “concerned” about you entering the “wrong washroom” and reported this concern to management, and that’s when your managers called the union and the lawyer, and then your managers called you.

## **Meantime Two: The Student**

Imagine, also, the busy grade 12 classroom. For the most part, students are working individually or in small groups on an assignment. Some students are visiting together, planning instead to complete the assignment as a weekend project. The day is rapidly coming to a close and the students' enthusiasm for a warm, sunny Friday afternoon is running high.

You've subbed for this teacher many times. When in this classroom, most students express their pleasure at discovering you will be there for the day. In this classroom the students take direction from you as easily as you would expect if you yourself were the classroom teacher.

One student asks for clarification regarding part of the assignment. You answer the question. A second student misses the answer and asks, "What did he say?" While the first student answers the second, a third student sneers, "*He?*"

You're startled. Some months ago, you began your Real-Life Experience, "the act of fully adopting a new or evolving gender role or gender presentation in everyday life" (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2005). No one has deliberately misgendered you or questioned your male gender identity for a long time. Your transition from female to male has not been secret: you have taught as both Mrs. and Mr., and your involvement in the struggle for trans\* civil and human rights is increasingly well-known to the public at large.

You realise the student is staring at you, a smirk on his face. His arms are crossed in front of his chest. He is leaning against the back wall of the classroom, his chair propped only on its back two legs. Even from the front of the classroom, his air of superiority is tangible. Without question, he's calling you out. Everything about his posture and tone is set to intimidate.

You look at him from across the room, your eyes now locked together as though you were mere centimetres apart. When you answer, your voice is calm and steady. "Yeah: he," you

say, “just like it says on the board.” You gesture back at the whiteboard where you wrote your name at the beginning of the day. The student scoffs dismissively, a harsh sound, not quite a chuckle and not quite a snort. Disdainful. He won’t be told anything by the likes of you. Holding his gaze, you offer him an opportunity, “Did you have something you wanted to add to that?”

Nonplussed, he deflates. His cool, superior posture unwinds into uncertainty. His arms uncross and hang limp by his sides as his chair settles to the floor. His voice also reflects the unexpected turn in this exchange, his answer of “No,” ending on a rising note as though he were uncertain of what he would need to say or do next if he were to answer “Yes.” You turn your attention back to the class at large for the last few moments of the school day. The bell rings: class dismissed. Within minutes, you are alone among the empty desks.

### **Context**

Meantime One and Meantime Two represent the far poles of my professional experiences as a trans\* teacher. For those of you aware of my unresolved legal struggles with an Alberta school board that terminated my substitute teaching employment for being trans\*, my framing of the two Meantimes as the *poles of my professional experience* may seem confusing. From my perspective, having one’s professional practice cut off altogether isn’t a particularly helpful example, as it does not provide opportunities for practical implementation beyond recommending “don’t fire trans\* people.” For me, recognising the differences between the two poles represented by the Meantimes needed much reflection over many years to make sense. At the time of their occurrence, both Meantimes were traumatic and left me feeling abused. Yet my reflections have led me to understand Meantime Two stands as an unpleasant yet ultimately enlightening experience, whereas Meantime One rekindles significant anxiety simply from

recalling the incident.

Meantime One represents the far negative of my professional experience as a trans\* teacher. Some particulars are necessary to explain why this story is much worse than it may appear on the surface. The managers in Meantime One were school administrators, a principal and a vice-principal, individuals in positions that represent great power within our schools. The school is located in the province of Alberta. Both the anonymous teacher who complained to the principal and I are teachers governed by the Teaching Profession Act (2000) of Alberta and both of us are compulsory members of the provincial teachers' union, the Alberta Teachers' Association. Finally, regardless of the contractual status of that anonymous teacher colleague, I am merely a substitute, guaranteed no more work than the single day that I am currently teaching.

At the opposite experiential pole is Meantime Two. Again, some particulars help explain why this story is not what it may appear to be on the surface. The statutory, regulatory, and policy environment within which teachers work clearly establishes positive expectations for safe working and learning environments, as well as explicit protection for "gender identity" as an enumerated category within our profession, as established by the Alberta Teachers' Association. As issues arising beyond the educational environment resulted in my active engagement with mainstream media regarding trans\* rights, I was also publicly known to be trans\* even by those I worked with in schools.

### **Exploring Meantime One**

Meantime One is an incident that could arise in any organisation wherein a manager identifies a problem and informs you of its resolution. However, Meantime One involves administration additionally informing you that a lawyer agreed that transitioning from one sex to

another is okay. If you happen to be trans\* yourself, you are likely already aware that transitioning in Canada is perfectly legal; no one need call their lawyer to ask about this legality on your behalf. When I include the particulars that situate this story within Alberta public education, a more worrying picture emerges. Even now, I am hesitant to label the events within Meantime One as deliberately malicious: after all, this particular school board did not choose to terminate my employment for being trans\*. Instead, as often appears to be the case when trans\* people engage with complex systems, the system broke. In this instance, the system in question is the system governing professional expectations for teachers in Alberta, a system that already explicitly includes protection for trans\* teachers and students.

According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2004a) *Code of Professional Conduct* (*Code*), a “teacher criticizes the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher only in confidence to proper officials and after the other teacher has been informed of the criticism . . .” (s. 13). Such a “teacher, when making a report on the professional performance of another teacher, does so in good faith and, prior to submitting the report, provides the teacher with a copy of the report . . .” (s. 14). The *Code*'s preamble “stipulates [the] minimum standards of professional conduct of teachers but is not an exhaustive list of such standards,” establishing a baseline rather than an aspirational target. In this framework, the baseline begins with one teacher speaking to another teacher regarding that teacher's conduct.

In Meantime One, the baseline for reporting teacher conduct under the ATA's *Code* was not met. Preceding this meeting, I had completed the first half of a busy day in a busy school. None of my teacher colleagues had approached me regarding either my activities at the school or my transition. While I am disinterested in discussing my transition within my workplace, trans\* people generally—including me—are casually and even routinely asked inappropriate questions.

For example, asking a trans\* person, “Have you had the operation yet?” is the same as asking, “What do you look like naked?” Particularly in the early days of my transitioning, I was asked such questions by all manner of people, including teachers, government officials, and even passing acquaintances. However, on the day of Meantime One, until I was brought to the office, nothing seemed amiss. According to the principal the “concern” was raised by one of my teacher colleagues, not by non-teacher staff—such as a secretary—who might be reasonably understood not to be beholden to an ATA regulation governing behaviour among teaching professionals.

The *Code of Professional Conduct* is not merely wishful thinking. The Alberta Teachers' Association itself is established through the Teaching Profession Act (2000), which is empowered by law to have such a code (s. 8.1). According to notes appended to the *Code*, “Items 13 and 14 of the Code . . . do not pertain to reporting to the [Alberta Teachers'] Association on the possible unprofessional conduct of another member” (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2004a). The principal's explanation of having contacted “the union” is perhaps explained by the *Code*'s note, except that according to the principal, a teacher made the complaint to the principal and not to the association; and again, no teacher made any comment to me personally at any time that day. To this day, I have no idea which teacher colleague spoke with the principal rather than with me; all I have is the memory of several minutes of sheer terror while bushes were beaten around “the situation.”

I must also query why I was asked to the principal's office in the first place. If, as he asserted, “the lawyer says it's okay,” then the principal logically had ample information to return to the unknown teacher colleague and inform said teacher that there was no problem whatsoever. The only individual(s) who needed further advice were those who were unaware that Alberta teachers may indeed be trans\*, that *it's okay* to be trans\*.

School and school board administrators have many obligations to meet each school day. But Meantime One demonstrates what I can only describe as a stunning lack of awareness regarding appropriate interaction among professionals—expectations clearly enumerated in the *Code*. Perhaps had all those involved in the discussions presaging that lunchtime meeting been more familiar with the particulars of the *Code*, they would have realised that neither the union nor the lawyer needed to be called: the *Code*’s sixth out of sixteen enumerated items is “gender identity” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2004a, s.1) the policy term used to describe how someone interprets their lived gender, which “may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth” (Quinn, 2010, p. 6; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010, p. 1). But the *Code* only references “gender identity” with respect to students. How were the administrators to know that a teacher should likewise not be harassed for their gender identity? For that we need to turn to a second essential Alberta Teachers’ Association (2004b) document, the *Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities for Teachers (Declaration)*, described as forming part of the constitution of the ATA. The *Declaration* contains a parallel section to that of the *Code*, as applied to teacher rights: “Teachers have the right to be protected against discrimination on the basis of prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2004b, s. 9). Some might argue that compelling me to attend an impromptu meeting in the principal’s office hardly constitutes discrimination—after all, teachers in schools frequently speak with administrators. Yet Meantime One wasn’t a moment of mentoring a teacher new to the fold: this was vague, oblique references to “the situation” and multiple, direct references to “the union” and “the lawyer”—all of which would prove to be a “situation” at least discomfiting even for a

seasoned teacher.

The policy and legislation described above are only part of the picture: issues of power also come into play. Without attributing malice to “the situation” I experienced with the administrators in Meantime One, the discussion was terrifying in part because the stakes were so high; quite outside of the fear of being accused of some sort of illegal activity, the very same people who might hire you for a longer-term teaching position, or even eventually recommend you for permanent teacher certification by the provincial authorities, are those who are conducting a discussion that is apparently serious enough to warrant legal advice. No teacher should be put in a position to have such statements made without benefit of at least a union representative at their side. Substitute teachers in particular may have minimal resources at hand. They may know few if any of their colleagues, they may be unaware of how school-based policies differ from site to site, and they may know little about the fine details embedded within the *Teaching Profession Act* (2000) governing the broader profession. As opposed to pensioned teachers who choose to take substitute teaching assignments after retirement, substitute teachers new to the profession may also have little practical ability to refuse work or challenge inappropriate working conditions because of their need for gainful employment. Administrators developing or implementing policy need to be attentive to more than just the words on paper; they need to be attentive to the power relations emergent from interactions with difference. Attentiveness to power relations means anticipating needs—or, if unanticipated, asking for and providing the resources needed with reference to interacting with difference.

## **Exploring Meantime Two**

After reviewing Meantime One, it would be easy to assume that the incident with the high-school student described in Meantime Two should be interpreted as equally negative. Prior to entering the teaching profession, I had not anticipated that students might choose to bully teachers. Once I became a substitute teacher, I experienced classrooms where some students would engage in behaviours clearly calculated to discombobulate the new person in the room, yet I would describe the vast majority of those behaviours as centring around testing limits. Yet when the student in Meantime Two drew my attention through his loud, sneering tone and intimidating posture, the difference between these two types of behaviours were unmistakeable. Being tested felt nothing like being targeted. While the student's apparent lack of knowledge regarding my highly-public trans\* status was charming, that did not make up for the trauma of the threat itself. Even so, Meantime Two is clearly distinguishable as ultimately empowering rather than disenfranchising.

In assessing and responding to this student's behaviour, I note that at that time he threatened no overt physical violence, albeit he appeared capable of enforcing a verbal threat by physical means. Yet threats need not be physical to be present. Consider Meantime One, wherein administrators imply something terrible by invoking mention of "the lawyer." While those involved in the first Meantime did not appear to be engaged in deliberate malice, the high-school student involved in the Meantime Two most certainly was: he intended to intimidate, a clear example of transphobic bullying (Maheu, Hillyard, & Jenkins, 2012).

Transphobic bullying is defined as "prejudiced behaviour against a person's actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression" (Government of Alberta, 2014). Among other techniques, deliberately misgendering a person only takes a single salutation or pronoun. Even

before I transitioned in the workplace, I had experienced two incidents of deliberate misgendering. One involved an anonymous student in a busy hallway remarking loudly behind me: “Oh look, it’s Missus Mannnnnnnnnn,” drawing out and playing on the final syllable of my last name. Another involved a student erasing the *s* from *Mrs.* on the whiteboard, later addressed by a different student who declared “That’s just mean!” and promptly rewrote the letter *s* in its correct position. Misgendering is a topic discussed throughout trans\* communities in many different contexts, including “violence” (Clark, 2014), “incarceration” (Allen, 2014), “hate speech” (Truitt, 2014), and “death” (Davis, 2014), to cite just a few.

Being an adult does not immunise a person from transphobic bullying, as “transgender teachers and other staff members experience verbal abuse that may drive them out of the profession” (Gender Identity Research and Education Society, 2010, p. 14). Given that the student in Meantime Two was giving every possible signal that the intent was to bully or harass, how can I possibly suggest that Meantime Two is somehow empowering rather than disenfranchising? Don’t both Meantimes mirror the same issues? At each separate Meantime’s occurrence, I certainly felt terrified, yet reflecting upon the specific content of each incident, Meantime Two reveals a very different sense.

Classroom management is an ongoing part of teacher practice. Teachers face a variety of unique individuals, personalities, learning needs, communication styles, and many other elements that influence the learning space we share together as teachers and students. Educators have obligations to ensure classrooms are safe, inclusive learning spaces. Such obligations are present even when teaching as a substitute teacher. For the time I am in any given classroom, I work hard to ensure my classrooms are also safe, inclusive learning spaces. Yet a substitute teacher is not the classroom teacher. Substitutes are also beholden to the lessons laid before us by

the absent teacher, and we are expected to use our professional competency to meet the classroom teacher's expectations in addition to the complex statutory, regulatory, and professional obligations upon us.

The Alberta School Act (2000) obligates boards to ensure that the learning environment is "a safe and caring environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours" (s. 45.8). To that end, the ATA's *Declaration* notes that "teachers have the right to expect standards of pupil behaviour necessary for maintaining an optimal learning environment and have the responsibility to use reasonable methods to achieve such standards" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2004b, s. 2). Teachers are also obligated by statute to "maintain . . . order and discipline among the students while they are in the school . . ." (School Act, 2000, s. 18.1.f). As the teaching professional in place within the room at the moment of Meantime Two's inception, I was the one who held fiduciary responsibility to meet these many obligations. During this Meantime, I was acutely aware that as in any other classroom conflict, the teacher's responses and actions could either enable or hinder resolution of that conflict. Additionally, while I was unaware of whether any other trans\* people were also within the room during Meantime Two, the possibility that others could be harmed by inaction was very real; just as with sexual minorities, gender minorities make up a small yet present part of any given population. International research on trans\* education issues reveals that "without firm action by the school, rumours, prejudice and bullying are likely to ensure swiftly" (Gender Identity Research and Education Society, 2010, p. 12). Indeed, even in Alberta, "transphobic and homophobic verbal bullying are heard every day by students in school. Yet these types of bullying are the least responded to by adults and youth" (Government of Alberta, 2014). I consider deliberately misgendering anyone generally to be an act of bullying. Deliberately

misgendering a person known or suspected to be trans\* is an act of transphobic bullying.

For many trans\* people, being “outed” without consent is a terrifying experience that can have tragic consequences. Animus of this nature may also lead to harassment “because they are *perceived* to be transsexual, transgender or intersex, or belong to social groups identified in particular societies by sexual orientation or gender identity [emphasis mine]” (Quinn, 2010, p. 11). Yet by the time I experienced Meantime Two, I was openly trans\*, engaging in trans\* human and civil rights activism in Alberta. The student in question had nothing to “out”; however, the type of behaviour that could lead to such an attempt was and remains my larger concern.

In Meantime Two, when the single, one-syllable word was uttered as a sneering threat, I suddenly saw myself being sized up and judged as being ripe for targeting. Targeting trans\* people is hardly new. Annually, trans\* communities commemorate the murder of trans\* people over the prior 12 months; since beginning my transition, that number has remained at well over 100 murders per year. Trans\* people are routinely denied medical care, housing, employment, and other elements that are essential to living successfully in our society (Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011). The processes for changing legal documents and other essential elements of modern living demanded by every imaginable authority is brutally convoluted. Indeed, only in early 2014 did an Alberta Court of Queen’s Bench judge determine that requiring people to undergo surgery before granting them permanent changes to a government-issued identity document was unconstitutional, noting that the statute “contributes to the disadvantage experienced by transgendered persons by perpetuating the prejudice and stereotyping to which they are subject” (C.F. v. Alberta [Vital Statistics], 2014, para. 59). In 2015, Alberta revised regulations governing both birth certificates and drivers’ licenses to be

more inclusive of those changing their gender identity (Government of Alberta, 2015), but for those who are newcomers to Canada or among those who are unable to update these documents, obtaining other identification such as a passport remains difficult (Mitchell & Carignan, 2015).

Yet “gender identity” is among those descriptions enumerated both in the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s *Code* and *Declaration*. While neither document directly governs the behaviour of students, the *Declaration* establishes teachers’ rights regarding student behaviour and notes “the responsibility to use reasonable methods to achieve such standards” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2004b, s. 2). In my own experience as an “out” trans\* person who has discussed trans\* civil and human rights issues publicly in the media, I have had many teacher-student interactions where students have questioned or commented on me being trans\*. I have acknowledged these questions or comments and noted that school is not the place for us to have discussions about my personal life: my obligation is to teach the lessons left for me by the classroom teacher, not establish an impromptu lesson that may well be interpreted as material requiring prior parental consent under Alberta education laws. Even if I were a full-time classroom teacher, I believe it is important to distinguish between my specific, particular transition and issues arising around transition generally. The latter fits well with issues of social justice, human sexuality, and other areas of the curriculum. The former is my personal life. Yet thanks to computerised databases, the ability of a trans\* person to keep a transition secret is severely compromised. A criminal records check can reveal trans\* status due to incongruent government-issued identity documents and contrasting-gender names. Other professional structures may also be inadequate for a trans\* teacher. For example, I was advised that I could only obtain an updated Teacher Qualifications Service (TQS) evaluation by re-applying (and re-paying), despite the singular change to my “qualifications” being that of changing from an “F”

(female) to an “M” (male). No teacher should be obligated to divulge personal details of their life to students, colleagues, or administration as part of meeting their obligations towards professional practice and teaching the provincial curriculum.

Again, discussing trans\* people and transitioning generally is distinct from discussions of an individual’s personal life. The elements of marriage transition may provide a helpful comparison. When Miss Jones becomes Mrs. Smith, it’s reasonable to acknowledge that Mrs. Smith was formerly known as Miss Jones. Once married, Mrs. Smith has chosen to follow a well-established tradition of adopting her surname to that of her husband. No one would reasonably consider such an acknowledgement unprofessional behaviour for a teacher with regards to communicating with students. However, if Mrs. Smith were to describe to her students the specific activities involved in consummating her marriage, we would reasonably consider such behaviour neither professional nor appropriate. For the trans\* teacher, the situation is more complex: a number of special-interest groups advocate for even the mention of words associated with trans\* (such as transgender, transsexual, etc.) to be banned from schools (see CBC, 2015). The perspective put forward by such groups is predicated on sexualising and objectifying trans\* people of all ages. For a trans\* teacher, this means their simple presence in their classroom or school may be perceived as contentious for some people in the educational environment.

Yet Meantime Two was a blatantly public challenge, simultaneously questioning and disrespecting my identity. Deliberately misgendering a person is both disrespectful and an exercise of power, regardless of whether the target of the misgendering is actually a trans\* person. Had I responded to the high-school student with a flippant, “Pardon me, ma’am?” I would have been engaging in equally inappropriate misgendering and bullying. While I see no shame in having once been female-identified, I have observed that a male person raised as a

male-identified person does not tend to appreciate having their maleness questioned, just as female-identified people do not tend to respond positively to someone questioning their femaleness. Such behaviours also raise important questions around expressions of masculinity and femininity, but those questions are beyond the scope of this article.

Meantime Two is ultimately a positive experience when situated within the broader policy, regulatory, and statutory framework. As a professional, I had the highest authorisation to expect students meet their obligation to “comply with the rules of the school” (School Act, 2000, s.12.d) and “respect the rights of others” (s.12.f). Additionally, the expectations established by the Alberta Teachers’ Association with regards to the “gender identity” of a teacher or a student clearly empowers—indeed, obligates—the teacher to ensure that transphobic bullying is not part of the classroom environment.

As noted, the deliberate misgendering of a person is an exercise of power. Whether or not the student in Meantime Two knew any of the many layers of policy, regulation, and statute governing our interactions together did not matter; as the professional in place at the time of this incident, I had the obligation to ensure these many expectations are met. Contrast this with Meantime One, wherein the top school administrators—and at least one professional colleague—failed to uphold those same policies, regulations, and statutes. Meantime Two was uncomfortable yet completely within my capacity to address; Meantime One upended the expectations teachers should be able to rely upon, underscoring the fragility of my employment at that moment, as well as the fragility of potential employment opportunities in the future. This fragility was underscored, highlighted, bolded, and italicised when administrators from a different Alberta school board fired me for being trans\* the very next day (CBC, 2009; Cotter, 2009; Truitt, 2009).

### **Concluding Remarks**

Both Meantimes reveal different aspects of exclusionary practice. The Meantime overtly intended as malicious was the one that was most within my power to address adequately, whereas the Meantime least obviously malicious was the one that most clearly revealed my personal powerlessness and vulnerability. As Meantime One demonstrates, the existence of statute, regulation, or policy does not prevent those charged with administering the same from failing to uphold them. Meantime Two demonstrates that teachers' knowledge of statute, regulation, or policy can be used to manage emerging challenges related to "gender identity" in a manner consistent with professional expectations under those regimes. Yet as noted, these two Meantimes are not the sum totality of experiencing transphobic behaviour in an education or regulatory environment, they are merely two poles of my professional experience.

The government of Alberta notes that, "discrimination on the basis of gender identity is a violation of human rights legislation" (Government of Alberta, 2014). Given the explicit inclusion of "gender identity" in the relevant governing *Code* and *Declaration* from the Alberta Teachers' Association, and that notions such as "caring, respectful and safe learning environments" (Alberta Education, 2014) have been bouncing around since 1997, I was ill-prepared for the emergence of the Meantime in an educational environment. The notion of the Meantime is by no means limited to the educational environment; transitioning revealed to me that despite claims of fundamental rights and freedoms belonging to everyone within Canada, trans\* Canadians often do not enjoy such rights or freedoms without considerable effort. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter) (1982) speaks of fundamental rights and freedoms that apply to "everyone" (s.2, s.7, s.8, s.9, s.10, s.12, s.17.1, s.17.2) and "every individual" (s.15). These fundamental rights and freedoms are not delimited by a list of attributes

wherein one may be excluded—there is no secret asterisk followed by a list of icky people that do not form part of “everyone” or “every individual.” This latter point is important: unlike the professional *Code* and *Declaration* from the Alberta Teachers’ Association, teachers in Alberta actively teach the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to students as part of the provincial program of studies. How seriously can students take such instruction when they might easily observe that some people in Canada—perhaps in their very own school or classroom—aren’t really accorded the same rights and freedoms as everyone else?

Many educators already practice inclusion, yet clearly this practice is inconsistent across educators as a whole. My experiences across many Meantimes—including the two shared in this brief personal narrative—suggest that in practice, lofty words and claims such as “inclusion” often remain aspirational rather than truly foundational, at least for those of us who happen to fall into a less well-understood context such as being trans\*. A practice of inclusion raises challenging questions about other types of differences within our classrooms: how do we include the vast diversity found in cultural practices, political ideologies, and religious beliefs that may also be found in our classrooms? As trans\* people continue to emerge from obscurity, undoubtedly many moments will arise that allow for deeper exploration of this question.

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